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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: April 20, 2009

Summary: Tehrik-Nifaz Shariat Mohammadi's (TNSM) chief Sufi Mohammad's statement declaring the "Supreme Court and High Courts 'unIslamic'" dominated headlines in all major newspapers on Monday. Reports of a drone attack in South Waziristan leaving "eight people dead and two others injured" also received extensive coverage. Newspapers reported that "at least 10 militants were killed as security forces attacked their hideouts in the Orakzai Agency." The remarks by Ambassador Holbrooke that he made during an interview with CNN that "no other place in the world today faced a more dangerous situation than Pakistan" received prominent display.

Most major dailies ran editorials on different aspects of the ongoing war on terror such as the drone strikes, suicide attacks and foreign aid for Pakistan. Commenting on the growing demands of Sufi Mohammad, the center-right national English daily, "The Nation," observed that "these developments clearly point to the erosion of state authority and are moment of reflection for the political leadership of the country." The liberal Urdu daily "Express" noted that the "worsening situation in the country demands an intensive operation against terrorists to break their backs. Any weakness in this regard would be akin to surrendering the country to them." The centrist national daily "The News" while discussing the "too many conditions to foreign aid" opined that the "best we can hope for is to modify them to better suit our national and international interests. But aid without conditionality - or close monitoring? Forget it." End Summary.

News Stories

"Govt Asked To Set Up Darul Qaza By 23rd; Superior Courts 'Un-Islamic,' Says Swat Sufi" "Dawn" (04/20)

"Chief of the defunct Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Mohammadi Maulana Sufi Mohammad said on Sunday the Supreme Court and High Courts were 'Ghair Sharaee' (unIslamic) institutions and, therefore, it would be 'Haram' to approach them to file appeals. He asked the government to abolish regular courts and sack judges and set up Darul Qaza for appeal by April 23 and appoint Qazis at all Sharia courts within one month throughout the Malakand division and Kohistan district as promised in the February 16 accord."

"Eight Killed In Swat Drone Attack" "The News" (04/20)

"Eight persons were killed and two others sustained injuries when a suspected US spy plane fired missiles at two houses in Ziyari Noor area near Rustam Adda in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) on Sunday."

"10 Die In Raid On Militant Hideouts" "Dawn" (04/20)

"At least 10 militants were killed and three tribesmen, two of them teachers and third a levy sepoy, were injured as security forces attacked hideouts of militants in the Orakzai Agency on Sunday."

"Situation Dangerous In Pakistan: Holbrooke" "Dawn" (04/20)

"US special envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke warned on Sunday that no other place in the world today faced a more dangerous situation than Pakistan. In an interview to CNN, Mr Holbrooke said that Pakistan also faced a "very difficult economic situation" and needed immediate help."

"Pakistan Must Do More To Fight Taliban: US" "Daily Times" (04/20)

"Pakistan must do more to 'erase' Taliban bases inside its territory, which are destabilizing the entire region, US commander of Western troops in Afghanistan General David McKiernan said on Sunday."

"Pakistan Had Alerted U.S. Of 1998 Nuclear Tests" "Daily Times" (04/20)

"Pakistan had informed the US of the nuclear tests it conducted in response to India's tests in May 1998 with a 'heavy heart,' former minister Gohar Ayub Khan has said in his new book."

"American Aid Should Be Unconditional: Musharraf" "Daily Times" (04/20)

"The United States should not attach any conditions to the aid it is giving Pakistan to help it root out terrorism, former president General (r) Pervez Musharraf said on Sunday."

"Govt Initiates Efforts To Hunt Down 'Bad Taliban'" "The Nation" (04/20)

"The PPP-led coalition government has launched efforts to track down and combat what is described as 'Bad Taliban' engaged in targeting the law-enforcement agencies in parts of the NWFP and FATA."

"Four Killed In Taliban-TNSM Clash" "Dawn" (04/20)

"Three activists of Tehrik Nifaz-i-Sahriyat-i- Muhammadi and one Taliban militant were killed in an exchange of fire between the two groups in Mamond tehsil of Bajaur agency on Sunday. Taliban spokesman Maulvi Omar said that two anti-Taliban men had been killed and 10 houses torched."

"Suicide Attacks In Country Forbidden: Ulema" "Dawn" (04/20)

"A convention of ulema and mashaikh organised by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) declared here on Sunday that 'suicide attacks in the country' were strictly forbidden in Islam and murder of any person belonging to any sect was not allowed."

"Embassies Prepare For Terror Attacks" "The News" (04/20)

"Western diplomatic missions have been forced to resort to safety bunkers on their premises in Islamabad in case of attacks and their staffers are being trained to reach these bunkers amid shootouts and bomb blasts. Sources revealed to 'The News' on Sunday that the government is also considering the diplomatic missions' request for removing the Frontier Constabulary (FC) troops from the vicinity of the Diplomatic Enclave and their onward deployment in the Fata where terrorists threaten to gain ground."

"Jamaat Threatens To Halt NATO Supplies If Drone Hits Continue" "Daily Times" (04/20)

"Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) on Sunday warned to halt supplies to Afghanistan-based NATO (Northern Atlantic Alliance Treaty) in Pakistan if the US continues with drone attacks in the FATA."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Worrisome Sequence," an editorial in the center-right national

English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/20)

". . These developments clearly point to the erosion of state authority and are a moment of reflection for the political leadership of the country. Islamabad must also intensify efforts to convince Washington to put a halt to the drone attacks..."

"Increasing Incidents Of Terrorism Can Be Dangerous For The Country's Existence," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000) (04/20)

"The worsening situation in the country demands an intensive operation against terrorists to break their backs. Any weakness in this regard would be akin to surrendering the country to them. It seems that the extremist forces in FATA, NWFP and Punjab have joined hands and their strategy is to shatter Pakistan's solidarity and stability. The peace deal signed by the NWFP government and the TNFM and Taliban has not produced positive results."

"Always Strings," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/20)

". . . We should not be surprised that the Indian lobby in the US sought to influence the conditionality surrounding the latest financial lifeboat to be launched in our direction. . . We are important not because of our size and wealth but because of the perceived threat we present to a range of nations not contiguous with us. America and other donors will seek to minimize the threat that they see, providing aid is one way of doing that, and if they decide to attach strings that make clear that funding activity by non-state actors who may seek to destabilize another player - India - is unacceptable to them then again we can hardly be surprised. The provision of aid is almost never transparent as far as explicit motive goes, and there is always a hidden agenda. We need the money. The money is going to come strings-attached. The best we can hope for is to modify them to better suit our national and international interests. But aid without conditionality - or close monitoring? Forget it..."

"Shutting Parliament Out," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/20)

". . . What can parliament do? At the counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency level, it can assess what has gone wrong in the state's response and what to do about it. The nearly 2,000 incidents of terrorism have occurred across the length and breadth of the country. What happens in southern Punjab is connected to what occurs in Swat which is connected to what happens in Fata which may, perhaps sooner than some realize, be connected to a surge of terrorism in Karachi. . . Put the facts and figures and reports before parliament. Let the people's representatives see for themselves how often the evidence points towards the Baitullah Mehsuds and the Lashkar-i-Jhangvis and how often towards the Indians or Americans. Empower parliament with information before expecting it to reach the right conclusions."

"Bulldozer Diplomacy," an Op-ed By Imtiaz Gul in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/20)

". . . Holbrooke, on the other hand, appears given only to the American-India concerns on the consequences arising out of the wave of terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This obviously kicks up a fundamental question: can the US expect effective cooperation by totally disregarding Pakistan's legitimate concerns, glossing over its geo-strategic interests and playing up themes that originate in India? The answer came from former US national security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski in an interview with a Pakistani private TV channel. He said the US was unable to find an answer to the question on obtaining Pakistan's help while Pakistan was sure it faced a threat from India. He most probably suggested that the US cannot win Pakistan over as long as it talks of it as an ally and at the same time targets its institutions. No doubt, the Pakistan US relationship is once again on a bumpy and troublesome path."

"Holbrooke's Observation On Foreign Aid," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (04/20)

"U.S. Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke has termed assistance announced by the Friends of Pakistan as insufficient and said that more aid is necessary to fight militants and strengthen the economy... Our economic experts have never spared a thought to whether the poor in this country will ever see good times... We need to pay attention to Mr. Holbrooke's observation that 50 percent of the people in this important Islamic country live below the poverty line. Changing this situation should be the real objective of our fiscal planning."

"Sharia Regulation In Swat," an Op-ed By Tahir Wasti in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/20)

". . . In Swat, the duty to make law has been bestowed upon qazis who would declare what is and what is not in accordance with the Quran, Sunnah, ijma and qiyas . . . Qiyas and ijma are defined differently not only by various scholars and sects but even the imams of five established schools of thought describe qiyas and ijma in dissimilar forms. Therefore, if an injunction is based on the Quran and Sunnah it may be acceptable to most Muslims but if it is based on qiyas and ijma it will not be acceptable to those who do not accept these two sources of Islamic law."

"Power Versus Law," an Op-ed by Huma Yusuf in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/20)

". . . These are just a few reminders that militants will never forgive and forget. The fact that they have convinced the Pakistani government and citizenry to do so shows their rhetorical prowess and over-confidence. Dealing with mullahs and militants in positions of power was going to be bad enough, but managing mullahs and militants with a penchant for realpolitik is a challenge Pakistan may not endure."

"The Taliban Are Here," an Op-ed by Samad Khurram in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/20)

". . . The sad story, friends, is that the Taliban are here, and unless we stand up against them in every possible way, Pakistan will be lost for good. And it will not be lost because of Zardari's real or perceived corruption or anything else like that, but because of the silence of the lambs - we ALL will be responsible if Pakistan fails."

"Implications Of The Deal" an Op-ed by Talat Masood in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/20)

"People for their own reasons took a sigh of relief that the peace deal may at least provide them security and a modicum of justice even if that is medieval.... The government has yielded under compulsion at a time when Talibanization is sweeping the country and overwhelming the state.... The spread of Taliban phenomena, albeit yet in pockets, is transforming the politico-social dynamic of Pakistan. Democracy and human rights will be the first casualties of Talibanization... How will Washington and New Delhi perceive our approach of pacifying the Taliban? Already the US has expressed its reservations and they are closely monitoring the situation. US view has always been that peace deals are counter-productive and end up strengthening the militants by allowing them to consolidate and expand their influence. They could be talked into it that unless there is massive military intervention with huge adverse consequences it was not possible to have handled the situation in any other way..."

"Dumb Charade," an Op-ed by Shahzad Chaudhry in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (03/26)

"Our representatives decided our future, the soul of our existence, after just five speeches, within a couple of hours.... We are all heading into the new ways - the ways of the Taliban.... I have no issue with the Nizam-e Adl; just that it could have been debated by parliament for the sake of the people that it purported to represent. Rubber-stamping, you might wonder; no way, not in this real parliament of the people's real representatives"

"Is Chaos To Follow Terror," an Op-ed By Rifaat Hamid Ghani in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/20)

". . . Cross-border terrorism is a regional threat; but in that context neither India nor Afghanistan can address Pakistan from a moral high ground. Nor for that matter can America in its Af-Pak context, not just because of things like extraordinary rendition, but because of its obtuseness in being dismissive of collateral damage and deaf to its resonances. Some of the many affected by it seek to strike back in their impotence. Pakistan's reluctance to meet internal problems arising from collateral damage should not be misconstrued as sympathy for terrorist kin. For Pakistan to be treating Pakistanis as callously as America feels free to treat them alienates the citizenry from the government and indeed has made terrorism more a Pakistan-specific problem."

"Hangu Attack And Pakistani Mind," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/20)

"... This gelling opinion is based on the threat coming first from India and then from America. There is a lot of incomprehensible mishmash of thinking here but this is how the scene is set. Baitullah Mehsud is asking Pakistan to abandon the Americans or at least get them to stop the drone attacks on him. In Pakistan, it is increasingly being said that Baitullah Mehsud is being paid by both America and India to mount terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. To what end, one may ask? The conspiracy-theorists' answer is apparently simple, "to destabilize Pakistan." And why is the US doing it? Because, say the conspiracy theorists, the US is ganged up with India to reduce Pakistan to the position of a lackey of hegemonic India. And, of course, all that anticipates the conversion of South Asia into a pro-American bastion against China, according to these people."

"New Wave Of Terrorism In The Tribal Areas," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (04/20)

"Twenty-nine persons were killed, including 27 policemen, in a suicide attack on police post in Hangu... The best way to rid the country of terrorism is the one adopted by the NWFP government in the shape of the peace deal with the TNFM. But this deal is not acceptable to the U.S. and just as in the past, it is engaged in trying to sabotage it. Hence the likelihood of U.S., Indian and Afghan involvement in the fresh wave of suicide attacks cannot be ruled out.... Instead of adopting a policy on terrorism that is dictated by the U.S., President Zardari needs to tell the U.S. that American policies are becoming a source of terrorism in our country. Hence the U.S. needs to review these policies, stop drone attacks and withdraw troops from Afghanistan."

"Attack On Police And Army Personnel In Hangu," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (04/20)

"Taliban's attempts to impose their solutions through force are weakening the Pakistani nation against imperialism. It is the religious scholars' responsibility to guide the Taliban and the entire nation and enlighten the nation clearly about their stance on suicide attacks. Moreover, their stance should be voiced collectively, not individually."

"Alleged Suicide Attack In Hangu," an editorial note in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (04/20)

"At a time when the Shariat laws are enforced in Swat, and people of Pakistan have taken a sigh of relief on restoration of peace in the region, the 'suicide' attack in Hangu occurred. It is a very tragic and devastating incident. Pakistani officials and media have termed it as a suicide attack. If it is really an act of local militants, it is condemnable, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. However, we must not rule out the possibility of some foreign hand behind this incident as anti-Pakistan elements are also engaged to sabotage the Swat Peace Deal."

"Terrorism And Friends' Neglect," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (04/20)

"Pakistan's economy is deeply affected by terrorist attacks and we have faced losses worth billions of dollars. Despite this fact, the U.S. and its allies are not paying full attention to Pakistan. America has promised to provide \$1.5 billion annually, and the Friends of Pakistan have promised \$5.28 billion. But this amount is not sufficient to fight militants and support the economy... In this scenario, the U.S. should improve its stance towards Pakistan and friends must also provide immediate assistance."

"Islamization: Cure Of All Evils," an Op-ed By Qazi Hussain Ahmad in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/20)

". . . Regarding the argument that promoting Islam would enrage Washington and the west, we would become isolated, and be dubbed as fundamentalists, etc., it must be kept in mind that alienating Islam will negate out existence and disintegrate the country. Islam is the basis of Pakistan, since it was created for Islam and not on the basis of some homeland."

"President Zardari's Demand To International Community," an editorial note in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (04/20)

"President Zardari has said that Pakistan has been confronting terrorism for the last ten years, international community will have to come forward to help Pakistan stop growing terrorism and extremism... International community must understand that Pakistan is being targeted just because of supporting the world in the global war on terror."

Patterson